

South Asian Contribution to World Peace: United Nations Peacekeeping

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Abstract

South Asia's contribution to world peace is undisputable proven in numbers of peacekeepers deployed in peacekeeping around the globe. So is South Asia's commitment to Charter of the United Nations Organization. Despite the above facts, and the large numbers of United Nations Peacekeepers in the field, scholarship on South Asian contribution to world peace is relatively very little. Also regional cooperation is necessary for better representation of South Asian actors at key decision making level to ensure greater regional influence at stakeholder meetings.

This paper discusses the rationales for contribution for UNPKO by South Asian countries. These rationales were developed by non - South Asian scholars for troop contribution by countries. The rationales are, namely the political and security, economic, and normative rationales. The two case studies of India and Sri Lanka elaborate the applicability of these rationales of contribution. South Asia has not explored its fullest potential as troop contributing countries (TCC's) to UN peacekeeping. The, the overall objective of this paper is to trigger a continuing dialogue on South Asian contribution to UN peacekeeping. The methodology of the research involves utilizing secondary data to develop the arguments.

Key Words

Peacekeeping, UN Charter, Capstone doctrine, South Asia, India, Sri Lanka, Resolution 1325

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Introduction

This paper aims to investigate the successes and challenges of South Asia's participation in UN Peacekeeping Operations, taking two case studies of Sri Lanka and India. The nation states of South Asia took a lead role since the independence of South Asian countries from the British colonial rule to maintain world peace. They do so, by contributing to United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (UNPKO). From the inception of UN Peacekeeping South Asian nations have come forward in troop contribution. They have been working to implement the principles of Charter of the United Nations over the last sixty years. South Asia as a region has become the largest troop contributor of personnel to UNPKO today. Of the total troop deployed in UNPKO worldwide more than 50% are from four South Asian countries. They are India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal. Thus the South Asian nations have accepted the challenge of catering to the rising demand for UNPKO. In the 21st century South Asia stands tall in meeting the rising demand of an unprecedented tempo with increased number of UN peacekeepers with complex mandates and scopes of missions. South Asia has also pioneered in introducing Women Peacekeepers in UNPKO. In addition Bangladesh host Bangladesh Institute of Peace Support Operation Training (BIPSOT), one of the most advanced UNPKO training centers in the world. All in all, South Asia's contribution reflects the commitment of South Asian nations to the United Nations charter in practical terms.

Today more than ever, the contribution to UN peacekeeping makes an impact in the face of large numbers of troop deployment. The growing and unprecedented demand for UNPKO resulted in a major new study on UN Peace and Peacekeeping Operations prepared by a panel of ten experts appointed by the UN Secretary-General. It was led by Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi of Algeria. The Report published in 2000 came to be known as Brahimi Report which called for renewed political commitment on the part of member states, significant institutional change, and increased financial support.¹ The report also introduced a new term in peacekeeping work, "peace operations."

United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (UNDPKO)

Peacekeeping is a core function of the United Nations. The UN Charter gives the Security Council primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. In fulfilling this responsibility, the Council can establish a UNPKO.² Peacekeeping is done by members who want to actively contribute to the mandate of the UN, maintaining peace and security in the world. According to the United Nations charter chapters 6 and 7 directly deals with dispute resolution. In Chapter 6, "Pacific Settlement of Disputes"

¹ UN, *Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (The Brahimi Report)*, (Washington DC: United Nations, 2000) [http://www.unrol.org/doc.aspx?n=brahimi report peacekeeping.pdf](http://www.unrol.org/doc.aspx?n=brahimi%20report%20peacekeeping.pdf)

² Mandates and legal basis for peacekeeping,; www.un.org/peacekeeping/operations/pkmandates.shtml

stipulates that parties to a dispute should use peaceful methods of resolving disputes, such as negotiations and mediation. It authorizes the Security Council to issue recommendations, but they are generally considered advisory and not binding. Chapter 7, "Action with Respect to Threats to the Peace, Breaches of the Peace and Acts of Aggression," authorizes more forceful methods such as economic coercion and severance of diplomatic relations. Should those measures prove inadequate, the Security Council may then "take such action by air, sea, or land forces as may be necessary to maintain or restore international peace and security."³ In addition, Chapter 8 of the Charter provides for the involvement of regional arrangement and agencies in the maintenance of international peace and security.⁴

Further, *The Glossary of the United States Institute of Peace* define peacekeeping as "traditionally peacekeeping was action undertaken to preserve peace where fighting has been halted and to assist in implementing agreements achieved by the peacemakers. These operations authorized by UN Security Council under Chapter 6 or 7 of the UN Charter usually included lightly armed military personnel and have the consent of the parties. The scope of peacekeeping activities has gradually broadened since the end of Cold War to include civilian and humanitarian activities such as food distribution, electoral assistance, refugee return and reintegration, civilian protection and preventions of gender-based violence, restoration of transportation and other basic services, and establishing safe havens. In recent years, peacekeepers have been placed in areas where fighting is continuing, and their role is more to position themselves between hostile parties, a situation in which there is often a mismatch between their mandate and their capability."⁵ The above clearly clarify the multidimensional peacekeeping which has also become an important international peace building instrument over the years.

In 2008, The United Nations, Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) released a hundred page document entitled: *United Nations Peacekeeping Operations: Principles and Guidelines*.⁶ This report summarizes the peacekeeping work of the United Nations from inception, capturing experiences of the six decades of UN peacekeeping. So developing from previous guidelines such as *An Agenda for Peace*, *Supplementary Agenda for Peace* and the *Brahimi Report* a new doctrine was produced by the UN on peacekeeping. The capstone doctrine of 2008 refers to the evolving body of institutional guidance that provides support and direction to personnel preparing for, planning and implementing UN

³ Charter of the United Nations and Statute of the International Court of Justice, see <https://treaties.un.org/doc/publication/ctc/uncharter.pdf>

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ United States Institute of Peace, *Peace Terms: A Glossary of Terms for Conflict Management and Peacebuilding*. 2011

⁶ UN Peacekeeping Operations: Capstone Doctrine: Report of the TfP Oslo Doctrine Seminar, 14 – 18 May 2008, Oslo, Norway, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, 1

peacekeeping operations. The capstone doctrine therefore sits at the top bringing nearly sixty years of previous UN peacekeeping experiences and advocates legitimacy, credibility and local ownership.

Peacekeeping remains a core function of the UN. Contributing to peacekeeping is done by members who want to actively contribute to the mandate of the UN, to make UN a successful global organization maintaining peace and security in the world. Beyond this simple justification countries contribution to UNPKO are justified by many different rationales.

Rationales for Contribution by South Asian Nations

The academic discourse on UNPKO draws attention to the reasons or rationales of why countries contribute to UNPKO. Alex J. Bellamy and Paul D. Williams in a research article titled "Broadening the Base of United Nations Troop- and Police- Contributing Countries" ⁷ categorizes several clusters of rationales related to political, economic, security and institutional concerns as to why states contribute to UNPKO.

According to the current academic discourse on peacekeeping, almost all researchers have identified the political and security rationale. That is, countries contributing to UNPKO stand to gain international political recognition and prestige. This is somewhat a valid point for contributors such as Sri Lanka emerging from a civil war background where peacetime military could gain international recognition by contributing more to UNPKO. As a small power contributing to UNPKO for the past 60 years or so, the case study of Sri Lanka is presented here for further clarification of the rationales of contribution.

Sri Lanka in United Nations Peacekeeping

In November 1947, on the eve of independence, Sri Lanka signed a defense agreement with the United Kingdom, former colonial ruler to furnish such military assistance required for training and development of Sri Lankan armed forces, namely an Army, Navy and an Air Force. This agreement strongly influenced the shaping of the country's armed forces in the immediate post- independence era. The Sri Lanka Army, the Navy and the Air Force were raised in 1949, 1950 and 1951 respectively by legislative enactments by the Parliament of Sri Lanka. Initially these forces were formed according to British model and were also directly linked with the British defense structure of the region.

Sri Lanka (called Ceylon at the time) first applied for the United Nations (UN) membership soon after independence in 1948. The application was vetoed by the USSR in the backdrop of cold war power play on the ground Ceylon was not free. The argument against acceptance being the existence of the Defence Agreement, External Affairs

⁷ Alex J. Bellamy and Paul D. Williams, "Broadening the Base of United Nations Troop-and-Police Contributing Countries," *Providing for Peacekeeping No. 1*, New York: International Peace Institute, August 2012

Agreement and the Public Officers Agreement between United Kingdom and Ceylon signed in 1947. The Sri Lankan Armed Forces were established through Army Act, no 17 of 1949, Air Force Act, no 41 of 1949 and Ceylon Navy Act, no. 34 of 1950.

Sri Lanka was admitted in its third attempt to the UN in December 1955.⁸ Soon after its entry the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka agreed to provide a Ceylon Army contingent for peacekeeping duties with the UN comprising of 4 officers and 130 others ranks of the first battalion Ceylon Light Infantry to serve with the UN forces in Suez Canal area.⁹ They were given intensive training in conventional military operations with special emphasis on patrolling and were due to leave for Egypt in November 1956 but could not leave the country since communal violence that erupted at the same time required their presence home. The recorded first Sri Lankan contribution was in 1958. The first Sri Lankan Army contingent on a UN assignment was deployed in 1958 in the UN Operational Force in Lebanon (UNOFIL).¹⁰

Next, four officers of the Ceylon Army were sent to UN Mission in Congo (MONUC) in 1960, and one of them was later appointed as Chief of the Military Intelligence Branch of the UN force in Congo, the second batch for the same was sent too.¹¹ In October 1965, Sri Lanka provided an observer group for United Nations India/Pakistan Observer Mission (UNIPOM). They were on duty from October 1965 to March 1966.¹² Next Sri Lanka contributed after a long lapse in 1994 in the UN operation in the Mozambique (ONUMOZ) by sending 10 civilian policemen.¹³ There were two Sri Lankan military observers in the UN mission for the referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO)¹⁴ UN mission of support in East Timor (UNMISSET) include two civilian policemen and one civilian policeman was assigned to the UN Operation in Cote d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast) according to UN data on past peacekeeping operations. The same source reveals that further Sri Lanka contribution was made with four civilian policemen were sent to the UN mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) and again eleven civilian policemen participated in UN mission in Liberia (UNMIL). For the UN operation in Burundi (ONUB) 2 Military observers participated. In 2004 Sri Lanka enhanced its contribution to UN peacekeeping by sending its largest infantry battalion of 751 personnel and policemen for the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINSUTAH) established as a result of the Security Council resolution 1542.¹⁵

⁸ Melegoda, Nayani *The Policies of Three Prime Ministers of Ceylon: 1948 – 1956* (Wijesooriya Grantha Kendraya, 2000) 112

⁹ The Sri Lanka Army, *Sri Lanka Army: 50 Years on 1949 – 1999* (Colombo, 1999) 98-99

¹⁰ Ibid, 104

¹¹ Ibid, 124

¹² Ibid, 181

¹³ United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL)

<http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/onumozF.html>.

¹⁴ <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/pastminursoF.html>

¹⁵ <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/minustah/>

Sri Lanka could not contribute with soldiers and police as much she would like for the UNPKO unlike its counterparts in South Asia due to internal security threats that prevailed in the country during 1971, and again from 1983 to 2009. The development and expansion of the military establishments of the country took place from a relatively small army, navy and air force to modern day organizations during this period. First these establishments were developed along with other development work in education, health and transportation. After the Sinhala youth rebellion against the government in 1971 and with emerging Tamil youth militancy in the late 1970's priority was given for rapid expansion and training of modern armed forces. Defense budgets were increased annually. The result was that by mid1990's Sri Lanka could boast of a well trained and experienced Sri Lanka Army, Navy, Air Force and a Police Department.

The end of the civil war in the country in 2009 with Sri Lankan armed forces highly trained in fighting terrorism, counter terrorism, well versed in International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and International Human Rights Law (IHRL) are now working as a peace time army involved in rebuilding infrastructure and for sustainable peace. It is possible that these trained personnel of the large army in Sri Lanka can contribute to UN peacekeeping on larger scale in the future if the policy makers decide to do so. As of March 31, 2013 Sri Lankan civilian police, UN military experts on UN Missions and Troops numbered a total of 1073. This is a figure far below in comparison to other South Asian contributors though not insignificant in world ranking of contributors to UNPKO.

The political and security rationales are very much applicable for Sri Lanka's contribution to UNPKO. As a pioneer and a committed member of the non – align movement contribution and playing a role for world peace was important for Sri Lanka. Hence Sri Lanka came forward offering its troops for UNPKO almost immediately after obtaining UN membership. As a small power in South Asia, Sri Lanka's contribution and recognition is very important to the country. Today Sri Lanka stands in the 25th position a committed partner in term of troop contribution to UNPKO.¹⁶

Relating to the issue of prestige, the major challenge for Sri Lanka in its UNPKO contribution arose when United Nations Human Rights Council, promoted by the United States of America, adopted a resolution "Promoting reconciliation and accountability in Sri Lanka" at its 19th regular session. The resolution:

Reaffirming that States must ensure that any measure taken to combat terrorism complies with their obligations under international law, in particular international human rights, refugee and humanitarian law, as applicable, taking note of the report of the Lessons Learnt and

¹⁶ Ranking of Military and Police contributors to UN operations, April 2014, http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/contributors/2014/apr14_2.pdf

Reconciliation Commission of Sri Lanka and its findings and recommendations, and acknowledging its possible contribution to the process of national reconciliation in Sri Lanka,

Welcoming the constructive recommendations contained in the Commission's report, including the need to credibly investigate widespread allegations of extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances, demilitarize the north of Sri Lanka, implement impartial land dispute resolution mechanisms, re-evaluate detention policies, strengthen formerly independent civil institutions, reach a political settlement on the devolution of power to the provinces, promote and protect the right of freedom of expression for all and enact rule of law reforms,

Noting with concern that the report does not adequately address serious allegations of violations of international law (A/HRC/RES/19/2);

Called upon the Government of Sri Lanka to implement the constructive recommendations made in the report of the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission and to take all necessary additional steps to fulfil its relevant legal obligations and commitment to initiate credible and independent actions to ensure justice, equity, accountability and reconciliation for all Sri Lankans; and requested the Government of Sri Lanka to present, as expeditiously as possible, a comprehensive action plan detailing the steps that the Government has taken and will take to implement the recommendations made in the Commission's report, and also to address alleged violations of international law.¹⁷ Sri Lanka denounced the process as "arbitrary."¹⁸

The subsequent resolutions in 2013 and 2014 at the United Nations Human Rights Council unfortunately challenged the country's work for the United Nations. Today political rationale of prestige in international relations is very much applicable for Sri Lanka's contribution to UNPKO.

Secondly, the economic rationale is very much applicable since monetary challenge of troop maintenance and financial constraints are certainly applicable to Sri Lanka. Most contingents are under-funded (Sri Lanka can afford to give only a 26 day training before deployment) as UN money is not paid in advance but rather after the work is done. Sri Lanka as stated before is a country emerging from a long war. Hence the defence spending is still fairly high. In 2014 budget allocation US \$ 1.95 billion was allocated for defence spending. Yet the per capita income remains relatively low.

¹⁷ United Nations Human Right Council, *Promoting reconciliation and accountability in Sri Lanka*. Geneva: United Nations Human rights Council, 2012. <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/G12/126/71/PDF/G1212671.pdf?OpenElement>

¹⁸ *BBC News* 22 March 2012

Therefore, at the level of the individual soldier though they welcome the opportunity of using their skills and experience to earn a dollar allowance (paid on top of their salaries from the army). Financial incentives for participating soldiers are high in terms of rupee value. Economic rationale is very much valid for the individual soldier from whom the government does not make any deduction from UN payments.

Finally the normative or institutional rationales do apply to Sri Lanka. *The 1978 constitution of the Democratic Sociality Republic of Sri Lanka* pledge Sri Lanka's commitment international peace and security in chapter IV under directive principles of state policy and fundamental duties.

Next, the case study of India is presented here as a big power contributor for UNPKO from South Asia.

India in United Nations Peacekeeping

In the present day UNPKO, India is one of the top if not the top troop contributing country in the world. India is also the largest democracy in the world. India's large population with its rich cultural heritage, huge labour force and market are reasons enough for international recognition and prestige in the United Nations and in the eyes of the world community. India's huge diaspora scattered all over the world is a strong lobby group for India in International institutions. At the outset it cannot be said that India's contribution to UNPKO is for political rationale as a foreign policy tool. Hence further investigation is necessary to determine India's political and security rationale for its commitment to UNPKO.

At the beginning, in late 1940's and 1950's the political rationale would have been a valid reason when India desired to play a significant role in the world. In the era of decolonization (1960's) of Africa, India played a major role in contributing troops for peacekeeping in the African countries. This stems from the leadership role it played in the non – aligned movement and the belief in Asian – African solidarity.

The case study of India is included in this paper to make the argument that political rationale cannot be applied across the border for developing countries. Rather it needs to be justified by the country's historical tradition of commitment to peace. India today ranked as number two contributor coming in as a close second to Bangladesh¹⁹ in UNPKO. The political will has never been an issue to the top contributor from South Asia. The political will is justified by the virtue of inheritance of a culture of military expeditions overseas. In the British Indian Army, soldiers of Indian origin carried out military operations in different lands and suffered huge losses for *Pax Britannica*.

¹⁹ Ibid.

The history of India's contribution to UNPKO as founding member of the United Nations is very well described by Lt. General Satish Nambiar (retd) in a special article commissioned by External Publicity division of Ministry of External Affairs on the occasion of 65th Republic day titled "India and United Nations Peacekeeping Operations."²⁰ This document gives a comprehensive picture of the Indian contribution starting from 1950's to today. To highlight the extent to which India has contributed, Indian involvement in UNPKO since 1950 is given below:

- (i) Korea 1950 - 1954: Paramedical Unit comprising Officers, Junior Commissioned Officers, and other ranks deployed to facilitate withdrawal of sick and wounded in the Korean Peninsula.
- (ii) Indo- China 1954 - 1970: India provided an Infantry Battalion and supporting staff for control of Indo-China comprising three states of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos to monitoring, ceasefire and repatriation of prisoners of war, among others.
- (iii) Middle East 1956 - 1967: United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF), where for first time armed troop contingents were deployed. India's contribution was an infantry battalion and other support elements.
- (iv) Congo 1960 - 1964 (ONUC): Two infantry Brigades comprising of Officers, Junior Commissioned Officers and other ranks participated and conducted operations.
- (v) Cambodia 1992 - 1993 (UNTAC): Troops from Indian Army participated to supervise ceasefire, disarm combatants, repatriate refugees and monitor conduct of free and fair elections.
- (vi) Mozambique 1992 - 1994 (ONUMOZ): Two Engineer companies, Head Quarters Company, Logistics Company, staff officers and military observers were provided.
- (vii) Somalia 1993 - 1994 (UNITAF & UNOSOM II): The Indian Navy and Indian Army took active part in UN Operations. Indian Army deployed a Brigade Group comprising of all ranks and the navy deployed four battleships.
- (viii) Rwanda 1994 - 1996 (UNAMIR): An Infantry Battalion group, a Signal Company, and Engineer Company, Staff Officers and Military Observers were provided.
- (ix) Angola 1989 - 1999 (UNAVEM): a Deputy Force Commander, an Infantry Battalion group and an engineer company and all ranks were provided
- (x) Sierra Leone 1999 - 2001 (UNAMSIL): Two Infantry Battalion groups, two engineer companies, Quick reaction company, Attack helicopter unit, medical

²⁰ Nambiar, Satish. Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India., "India and United Nations Peacekeeping Operations." [http://mea.gov.in/articles-in-indian-media.htm?dtl/22776/India and United Nations Peacekeeping Operations](http://mea.gov.in/articles-in-indian-media.htm?dtl/22776/India+and+United+Nations+Peacekeeping+Operations)

Next, economic rationale or financial incentives are put forward by western scholars as rational for large contribution by the developing countries. The argument is based on the fact large contributions are from South Asia and Africa, and much less from the developed world. A very few Peacekeepers come from Canada, Japan, and Norway for example where the average GNI per capita income is about US \$ 45,000 according to current World Bank figures (2013). The argument is that the weakening political will on the part of developed countries as opposed to growing willingness of developing countries to get involved in UNPKO work is the economic rationale and namely the monetary incentives. The following quoted from *The Diplomat* is a good example of the thinking outside South Asia in proving the economic rationale applicable to South Asia:

“For India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, for example, peacekeeping is an inexpensive way to maintain large armies and boost the pay of select troops, while also building diplomatic inroads in poorer countries that might be rich in resources that South Asia lacks.”²¹

This ignores the fact that most South Asian countries maintain sizeable if not huge defence spending budgets. Therefore it is a possible to say that a rather different feeling exists in South Asia. That is economic/financial rationale is very much over emphasized by western scholars overlooking the fact that South Asia had a culture of contribution to world peace. Rather, it is a payment for assigned work and cannot be considered as a philanthropic or monetary incentive.²² The soldiers of South Asian countries individually benefit with enhance income cash paid in dollars which would amount to several times higher than their regular salaries from the respective armies whereas soldiers from developed countries would earn bigger salaries in the home country.

Today, India's defence budget stands at US \$ 38.35 billion. Arun Jaitley, who is both the Defence Minister and the Finance Minister in the new BJP government, presented the budget for the year 2014-15 on July 10, 2014. He stated:

"There can be no compromise with the defence of our country. I therefore propose to allocate an amount of 2,29,000 crore for the current financial year for Defence. ... Modernization of the armed forces is critical to enable them to play their role effectively in the Defence of India's strategic interests. I, therefore, propose to increase the capital outlay for Defence by 5,000 crore over the amount provided for in the interim Budget. This includes a sum of 1,000 crore for accelerating the development of the Railway system in the border areas. Urgent steps would also be taken to streamline the procurement process to make it speedy and more efficient."²³

²¹ Axe, David *The Diplomat* "Why South Asia Loves Peacekeeping." <http://thediplomat.com/2010/12/why-south-asia-loves-peacekeeping/2/>.

²² General Nambiar at the Regional Conference on United Nations Peacekeeping: South Asian Perspectives, South Asia University, March 1 2014.

²³ Global Security, *Indian Military Budget* <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/india/budget.htm>.

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